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Human rights questions

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 30 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On 25 July 2002, the Cuban citizen Adriana Pérez O'Connor was detained upon her arrival at the international airport at Houston, Texas, and denied entry into the United States of America. She is the wife of Mr. Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, a Cuban citizen unjustly sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment plus 15 years in an unfair and politically motivated trial, after being subjected to 17 months of total isolation and other inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment. An appeal of this decision is in progress.

Mr. Hernández, like his four companions who are also imprisoned, is completely innocent of the charges against him. In reality, as was amply proven during the trial, he was sentenced exclusively for having infiltrated various terrorist groups which operate freely in Miami in a purely altruistic attempt to prevent terrorist acts, organized and financed with full impunity from United States territory, against the Cuban people and to save the lives of innocent Cuban and United States citizens.

Ms. Pérez O'Connor travelled to the United States after obtaining the appropriate American visa for the purpose of visiting her husband. She arrived in Houston at approximately 10.30 a.m., Havana time, intending to continue on a later flight to Los Angeles, California. She was accompanied by a diplomatic officer of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington.

However, on her arrival, Ms. Pérez O'Connor was isolated, arbitrarily detained, deprived of her passport, photographed, fingerprinted and subjected to illegal interrogation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), until she was finally expelled on a flight to Mexico, 11 hours later.

The premeditation and bad faith of the actions of the United States authorities were particularly offensive, since the authorities had first issued Ms. Pérez O'Connor a visa, only to humiliate her and deny her entry into United States territory.

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During the first eight hours the Cuban diplomat remained with her, despite the insistence of the authorities, who ordered him to leave, until he was removed by five armed and uniformed agents of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). From that moment on, the efforts made by Cuba and of Ms. Pérez O'Connor to allow the latter to communicate with the Cuban Consul were fruitless. She was able to contact him by telephone only a few minutes before boarding the plane to return to Mexico.

Over the 11 hours, representatives of Cuba, both in Havana and Washington, were making efforts with the United States authorities to attempt to bring an end to an arbitrary and illegal situation which, in addition to the cruel and unreasonable treatment of Ms. Pérez O'Connor, was in gross violation of international norms and practices, in particular the integrity and prerogatives of the Cuban diplomat and the Consul. We reiterate our vigorous protest of these totally unacceptable actions to the United States Department of State.

This cruel and unusual treatment violated the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and in effect constituted an additional punishment for Mr. Gerardo Hernández, by attempting to keep the couple separated for life.

Acts such as this reveal the collusion of the federal authorities in the terrorism against Cuba carried out from Miami.

Gerardo Hernández and his companions are heroes of the Republic of Cuba and political prisoners in the United States.

The detention of Ms. Pérez O'Connor and the revocation of her visa could only have been carried out for the purpose of causing additional suffering to the accused during his appeal, and constitute cruel and illegal acts and a grave violation of the human rights of Mr. Hernández and his wife.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 119, entitled "Human rights questions", and 166, entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism".

(*Signed*) Bruno **Rodríguez Parrilla**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative